

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Statement regarding the compatibility of a transmission line across Kofa National Wildlife Refuge
March 8, 2007

The Kofa National Wildlife Refuge in southern Arizona received an application for a right-of-way permit from Southern California Edison to construct the Devers Palo Verde #2 500 kilovolt electric transmission line through approximately 24 miles of the refuge. As proposed, there would be a total of 85, four-legged lattice towers with a 130-foot wide right-of-way installed in the corridor across refuge lands. The line is part of a new 230 mile line. The application was received in November 2005. In December 2006 the Service published a draft compatibility determination for public comment. On Monday, March 5, 2007, the Service informed the company that their application was found to be incompatible with the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System and the purposes for which Kofa National Wildlife Refuge was established. The company can appeal the Service's decision.

Kofa was established in 1939 for the conservation of natural wildlife resources. More than three-fourths of the 665,400 acre refuge is comprised of wilderness that is managed consistent with the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act. The project, as proposed, would destroy nearly 100 acres of Sonoran Desert scrub and fragile desert soils. This loss alone affects 13 plants protected under the Arizona Native Plant Law. There are at least ten rare species that occur within that affected area. Desert bighorn sheep breed and have their lambs in an area that would be affected. In past years, desert bighorn sheep from Kofa have been used to re-establish populations in Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico as part of an exchange program. At least five migratory bird species could be negatively impacted with destroyed nesting or foraging habitat. Potential collisions with towers could result in their death.

Kofa is a special place that attracts visitors locally, nationally and internationally. The negative impacts to the environment are both direct and indirect. The view of 85 towers and associated conductors degrades the landscape for wildlife-dependent recreation including observation, photography, and hunting. The associated visitation has a positive economic impact in the community.

The full analysis is available on the web at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/arizona/kofa.html>.